

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, April 15, with transcript, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. B P alermo, April 15, (1901.) My dear Alec:

It really seems the most difficult thing for me to write you. I have written you many times and in many different moods, but the letters never get beyond my brain. I am so occupied all the time, not busy, but occupied. Then we have been very tired and have been to bed early. I am with Mamma a great deal, and as she cannot read very much, I spend most of the time talking to her. Just tonight she is not very well, another attack like that in London, but not so bad I hope. She got too tired, but it is hard to know when to stop her, for she wants to see things more than any one else. This is the best hotel we have struck yet. American in its newness and gorgeousness, European in the solidity of its erection. Its floors are of stone, its wall of thick turfa blocks, its terraces and walled embankments over the rocks of solid turfa blocks with tops of slate or rich gardens beautifully laid out with palm trees and semitropical plants. The hotel is only five months old, all its papers and hangings Liberty's best, all the well made furniture carefully of Palermo's workmanship, for so the rich public-spirited banker who built it would have it. The baths are of marble, wainscotted breast high of marble, the carpets rich blue velvet, the lights electric. There is one tremendously dignified functionary all in black satin, silk stockings, pumps and low patent leather shoes, another in red and blue with white stockings. The banquet hall is painted by Parisian artist, the building itself is Morrish 2 in feeling, beautifully situated just above the rocks on the water's edge on the slopes of famed Mount Peligrino, and our rooms looks across the loveliest of bays, across the harbor filled with hundreds of vessels, to the wonderfully beautiful sharp-cut purple hills beyond.

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The Royal Chapel has not its like elsewhere in Europe for the glory and utterly satisfying richness of its interior. It affects me as I imagine a glorious piece of music might you. The surfaces are all plain and covered with the richest mosaics all in gold and blue and reds, principally gold. Below the mosaics are rich cool gray marbles and the floors are of gray marbles, set with rich porphyry, and other rich colored marble. Yesterday we attended high mass there. The sun streamed through the small high windows, the gold mosaics gleamed rich, and the grand face of Christ shone out of the hollow, over the high altar. The white robes of the bishop contrasted with the rich purples of the choristers and the clouds of incense lent the last touch of enchantment. You have never seen anything like it. Northmen from northern Norway, brothers of those who wrought in celati the Cathedral of Trondhjem came to Norman, France, and thence still carrying the ideals of their ancient home to Southern Sicily where they have left the impress of their work, side by side with that of Saracenic Arabs. And the two styles blending together and yet remaining distinct have produced some wonderfully beautiful results here.

When I was coming here I wrote to the agent of the Mutual Life enclosing a letter of introduction, and asking that he would kindly send some one to make sure that we got good rooms. They not only did so, but have feted us ever since in grand style, operas, drives to Monreale and automobile spins, lunch, teas, etc. The children three have lost their hearts to them, to gallant Edwardo the married man and melancholy Ernesto the bachelor who cares for no one, no not he. The possession of a very handsome wife with whom he seems on extremely good terms and a pretty little spoilt daughter has not prevented Edwardo from many an extremely complimentary speech to all three and they declare him about the handsomest man they ever saw, handsomer than Ernesto but just because he makes it so very evident that he doesn't care for them they are wild over him. Beside there hangs over him the romance of some unknown tragedy, and who could resist such attractions.

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If you do not come over I will return early in June. But I would like to carry out our plan of proceeding hence to Berlin where Mr. White is very urgent that we should come. Then we will sail. Would you advise our going via Halifax? and thus avoiding the long journey up from New York? Daisy and I think we would prefer it.

Your letter regarding my education and property when ? voter qualifications came yesterday. I don't think you can have read my letter, you seized on the propositions and demolished them without considering my arguments at all, I do not think it was quite a fair reply. You set up certain propositions which you said were mine and knocked them down. Now I do not see where your minority comes in if the standard of necessary educational qualification is low enough. Your Pistol argument I think poor because you certainly would not put a loaded pistol in an infant's hands. For why? because he is not educated up to the use of it. Before you attempt marksmanship you must come to the knowing of which end is the shooting part of the pistol and which the trigger, or from want of this necessary education the man might shoot himself first. Therefore certain elementary education is presupposed before you put the pistol in a man's hands. I call a certain amount of knowledge of the English language of our constitution of reading and writing the elementary knowledge such as a man must have before using a pistol. Read my letter again.

Lovingly, Mabel.